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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4502

COMMITTEE  
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND  
FORESTRY  
APPROPRIATIONS  
JUDICIARY

July 14, 2001

The Honorable Anne Patterson  
Ambassador  
U.S. Embassy Bogota

FAX: 011-57-1-315-2197

Dear Ambassador Patterson:

As you know, for over two and a half years I have tried to find out what happened on December 12, 1998, in the village of Santo Domingo, near Tame, Arauca, when a rocket explosion caused the deaths of 17 people, including 7 children.

The Santo Domingo case continues to concern me, particularly given new allegations about the possible participation of employees of an American company called "Airscan." According to recent press reports based on the testimony of the implicated Colombian Air Force pilots, the American Airscan employees may have provided targeting information that led to a fatal rocket launch against the village. It is my understanding that it has already been determined that the aircraft that fired the rocket was an American-made helicopter, and that the rocket was manufactured in the United States.

In addition, I am troubled that, thirty-one months after the incident first came to light, there is still no clear resolution of the case.

I know that you have closely followed this case and would appreciate your views on these new allegations. I would also like to know what efforts the Embassy is making to assist the Colombian judicial authorities in locating the American pilots and determining who was in the plane at the time, what its mission was, under whose authority the plane was operating, and whether it assisted in the attack in any way.

I am also concerned that Colombian military officers may have misled the Embassy, among others, about the cause of the explosion. On December 30, 1998, your predecessor, Ambassador Kamman, informed me that the Embassy's preliminary assessment was that the Colombian military's version of events (a FARC truck bomb) had credibility. Is this the Embassy's view today?

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: DONALD A. JOHNSTON  
DATE/CASE ID: 29 MAY 2002 200102988

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Finally, as a follow-up to my letter to you of November 8, 2000, I would like to have your opinion on whether or not effective measures, as required by the Leahy Amendment, have been taken with respect to this tragic event. While I agree with you that Colombia is best served if it investigates and resolves this case, it seems to me that the prolonged delay increasingly complicates matters. Also, I understand that the Colombian pilots continue to be prosecuted by a military tribunal, which has a long-standing record of shielding military officers, especially those who gave the orders, from punishment.

Thank you for your assistance.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Leahy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

PATRICK LEAHY

Chairman

Foreign Operations Subcommittee